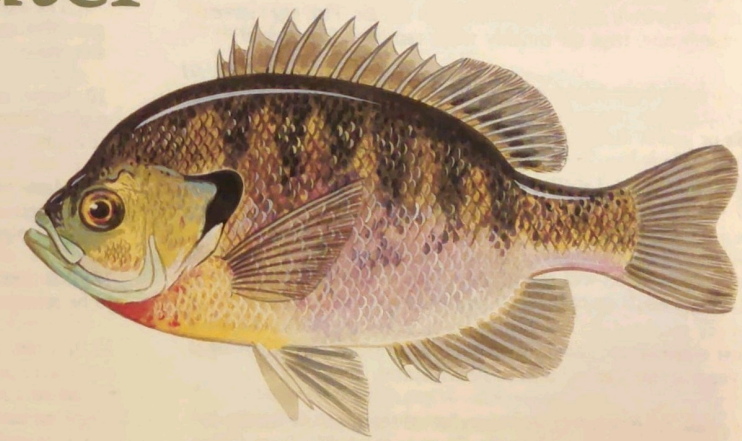
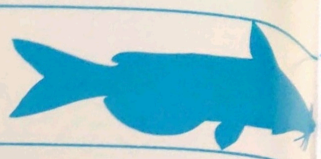
Common Freshwater Fish of Illinois

Referred by the
Elgin Area Convention
and Visitors Bureau
800-217-5362



Fish Facts and Fallacies



1. When bluegills or other sunfish are overpopulated and crowded, they prey on bass eggs and fry and prevent bass from reproducing successfully.

2. Birds do not stock ponds with fish. Fish eggs eaten by birds are quickly digested. Eggs that cling to the bodies or feet of birds would not survive a long flight through the air. Fish eggs have a thin membrane, thus die quickly when removed from water.

3. Fish have been found in corn fields or streets after a heavy rain, but it does not rain fish. These fish swam there from nearby creeks or ponds during high water and later became stranded. Cyclonic winds have been known to suck up water and fish from ponds and lakes and scatter the fish over fields. However, this rarely happens.

4. When fish seem to appear miraculously in an isolated pond, intense investigation will reveal that someone stocked the pond — and it wasn't birds or rain.

5. Most warmwater game fish do not live much longer than eight to ten years in the central and southern states.

6. The grass carp is the largest member of the minnow family in Illinois and was introduced into the State in the 1970's from China.

7. Large fish are found more often in shallow water during the spring and fall and in the cooler deep water during the summer.

8. The best hours for catching fish are the early morning and late afternoon during the normal fishing season.

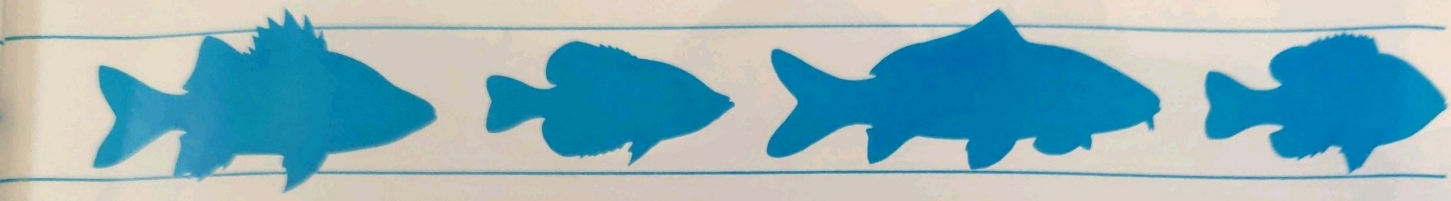
9. The age of fish can be determined by counting the annual growth rings of scales, otiliths (ear stones), rays or other boney structures.

10. Some fish "sleep" by remaining quiet on the bottom during the night. Others, such as catfish, are most active and feed primarily at night.

11. Many fish can change their color to match their surroundings for protection. The fish see changes in color and expand or contract pigment cells in the skin to match the background.

12. It is desirable to wet your hands before handling fish that are to be returned to the water unharmed.

13. If a pair of large bass (one male and one female) were placed in a one acre pond with an average depth of five feet where they produced a normal number of young (20,000), and if all the offspring survived for three generations (considering that only one-half of the offspring (female) would lay eggs), about 2 billion fish



would result. If these fish average one pound each, there would be 2 billion pounds of bass in the pond. The described pond would contain about 14 million pounds of water. From this one pair of bass with complete survival of fish for three generations, the fish would not only completely replace the water, but would be piled about 715 feet above the original level of the pond.

14. Fish do not possess a high degree of intelligence. They rely primarily on five senses to survive from day to day. These key senses include sight, hearing, vibration detection, smell and taste.

15. Fish have been called super-sniffers. Smell and taste are two senses which are particularly developed in fish that have poor vision (channel catfish for example). Dirty or off-colored waters limit fish vision. Fish which live in these waters rely on their senses of smell and taste to feed.

16. Fish have four nostrils, two on each side of the snout. Water flows into the front nostril, then into the nasal cavity and finally out of the rear nostril. The amount of sensory tissue tends to increase as a fish gets older, which accounts in part for the belief that fish become "wise" with age.

17. A fish is sensitive to sound vibrations and can "hear" in the water. Fishes have no external ears, but "hears" with its inner ear and connecting air bladder which serves as an underwater microphone. In addition to their inner ears, fish have a second sensory system known as the lateral-line which extends along the fish's sides and detects water movements.

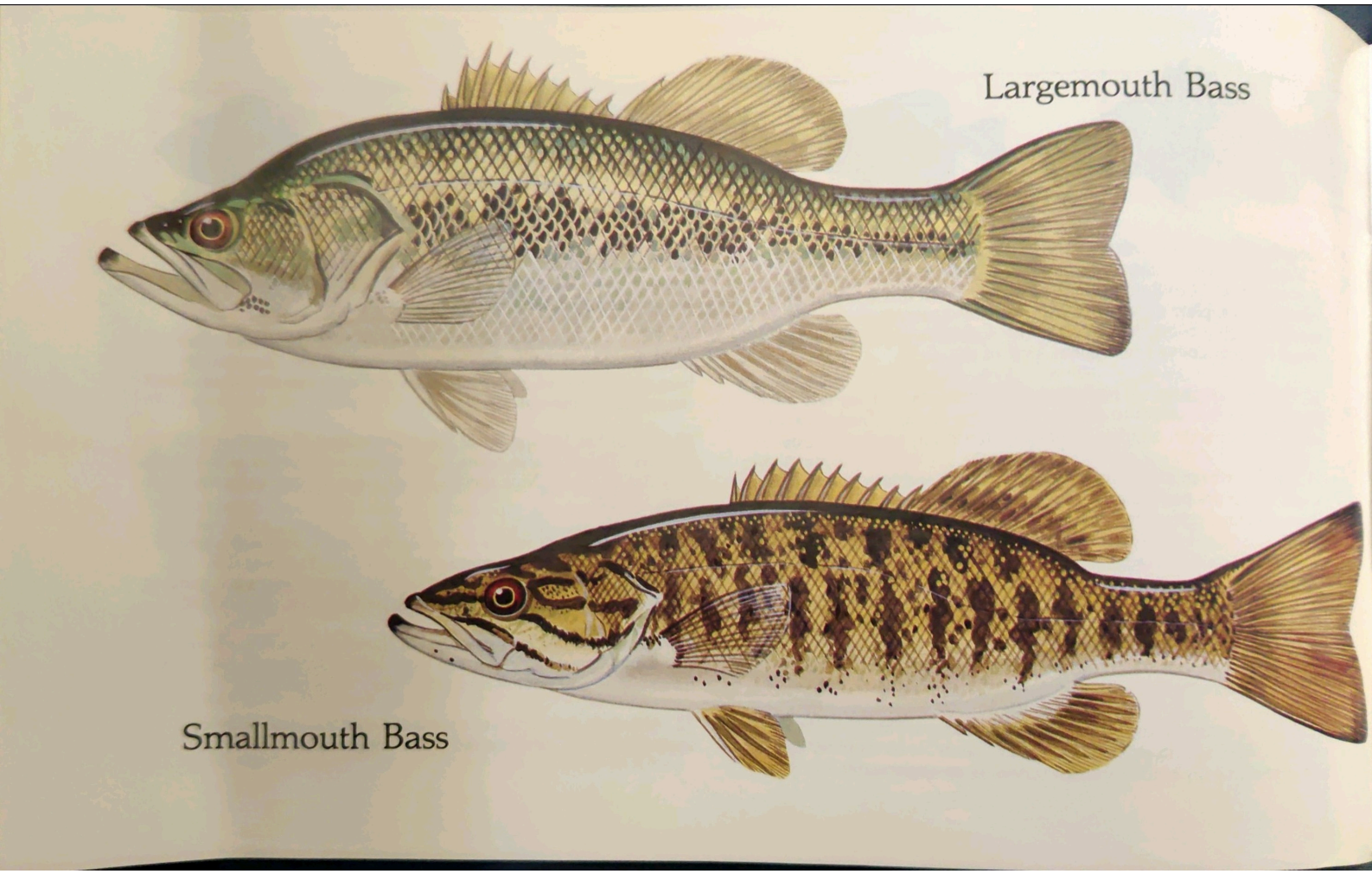
18. Most species of fish have color vision to a degree and some are much sharper at color discrimination than others. Largemouth bass respond to red above all colors and can even see colors above the surface of the water.

19. Illinois has 196 species of fish representing 77 genera and 28 families. Illinois is also home to 14 endangered species of fish that may not be taken. Nine species of fish have become extirpated from Illinois.

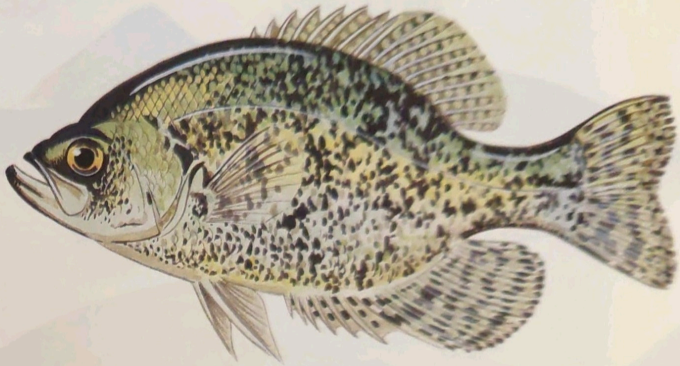
20. The toal diet of turtles is usually 80 percent vegbetable matter, about 17 percent animal matter and less than 3 percent fish. Turtles do not harm fish populations and some species are good to eat. Turtles are not dangerous to people when left undisturbed.

21. The largest fish ever captured in Illinois waters was a lake sturgeon (*Acipenser fulvescens*) from Lake Michigan in 1943. The fish weighed 310 pounds and was 7 feet, 11 inches long.

22. Although most fish are considered cold blooded, body core temperatures typically exceed water temperatures.


Largemouth Bass
Smallmouth Bass

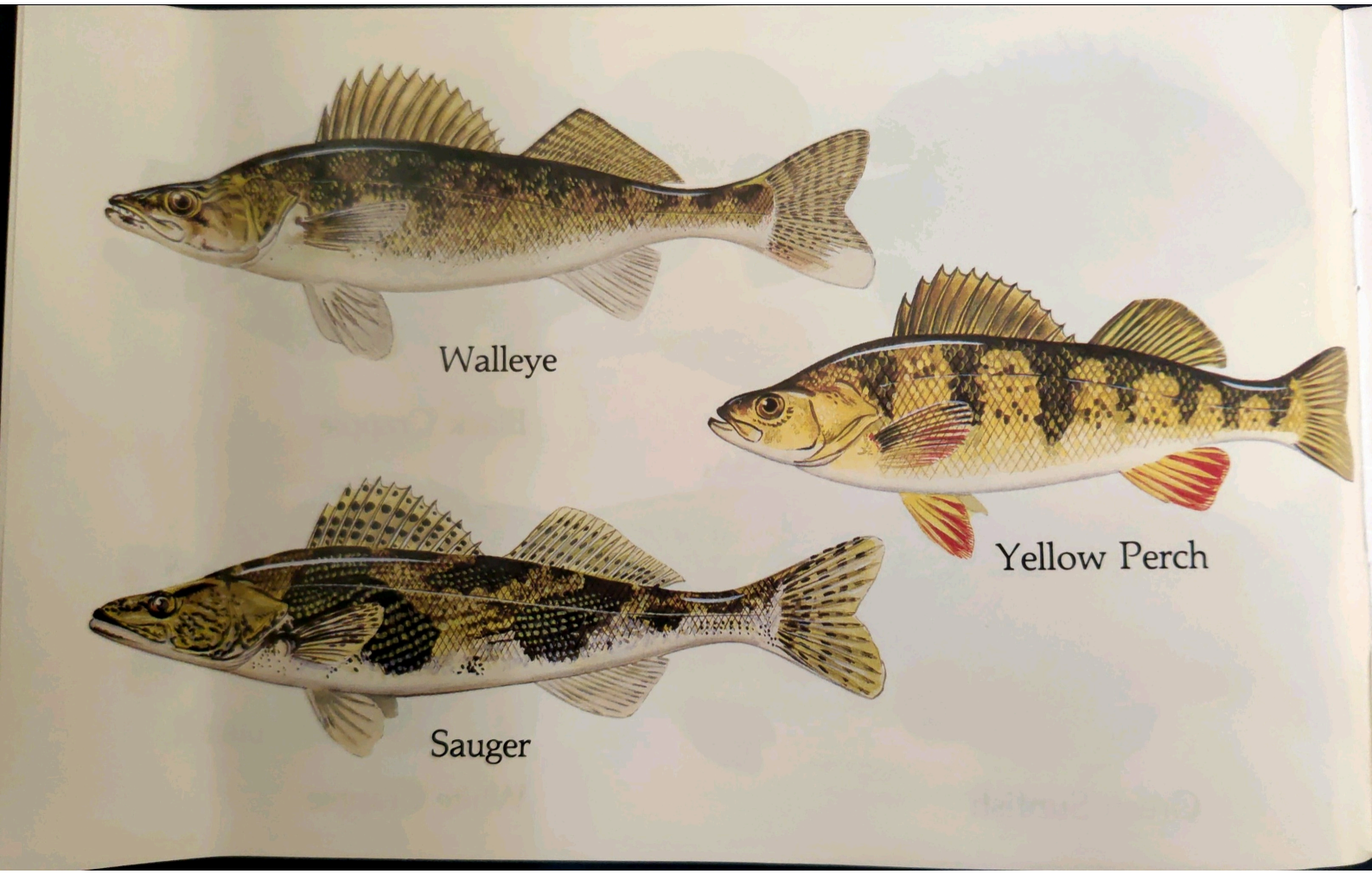
Bluegill

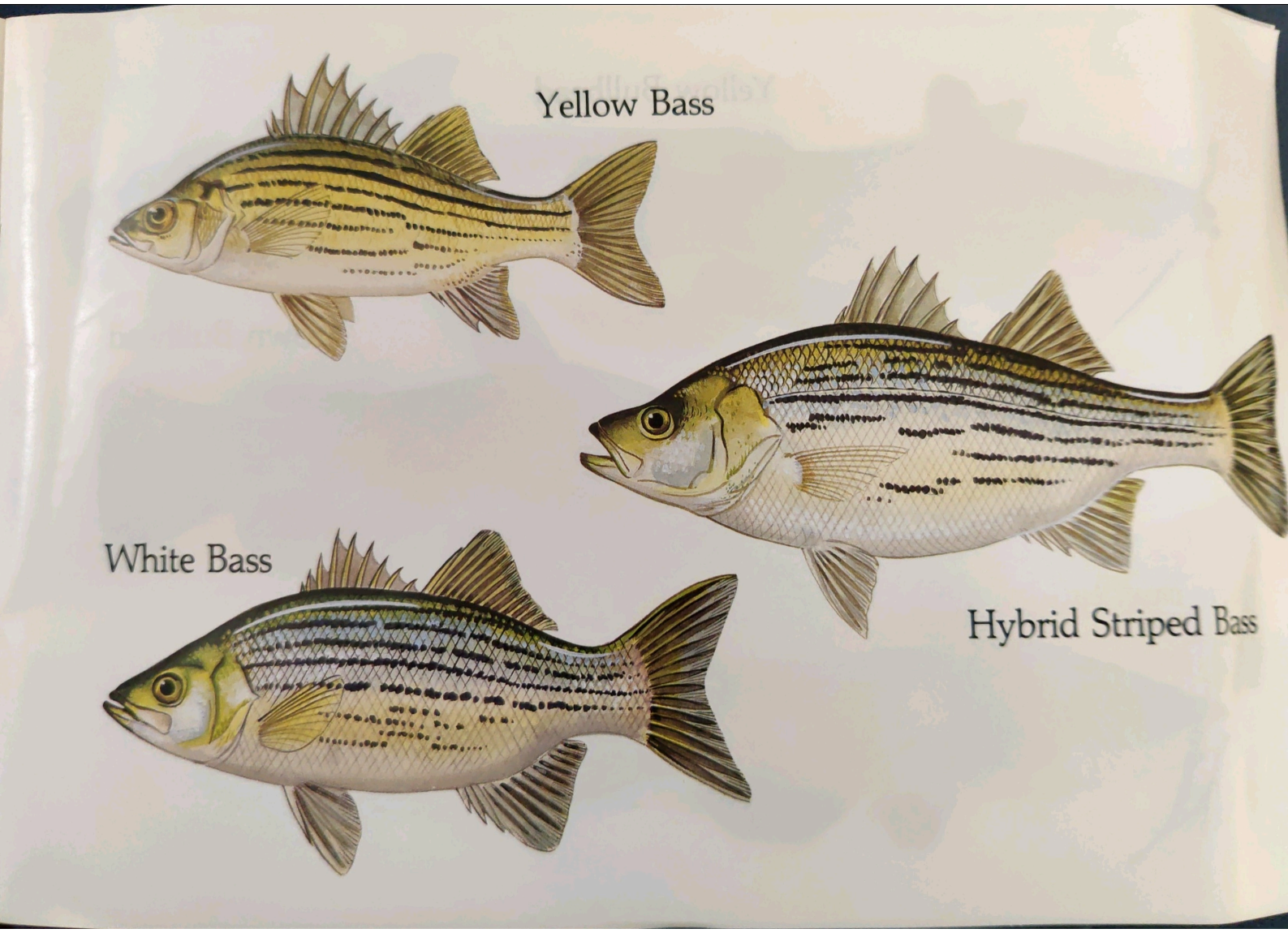


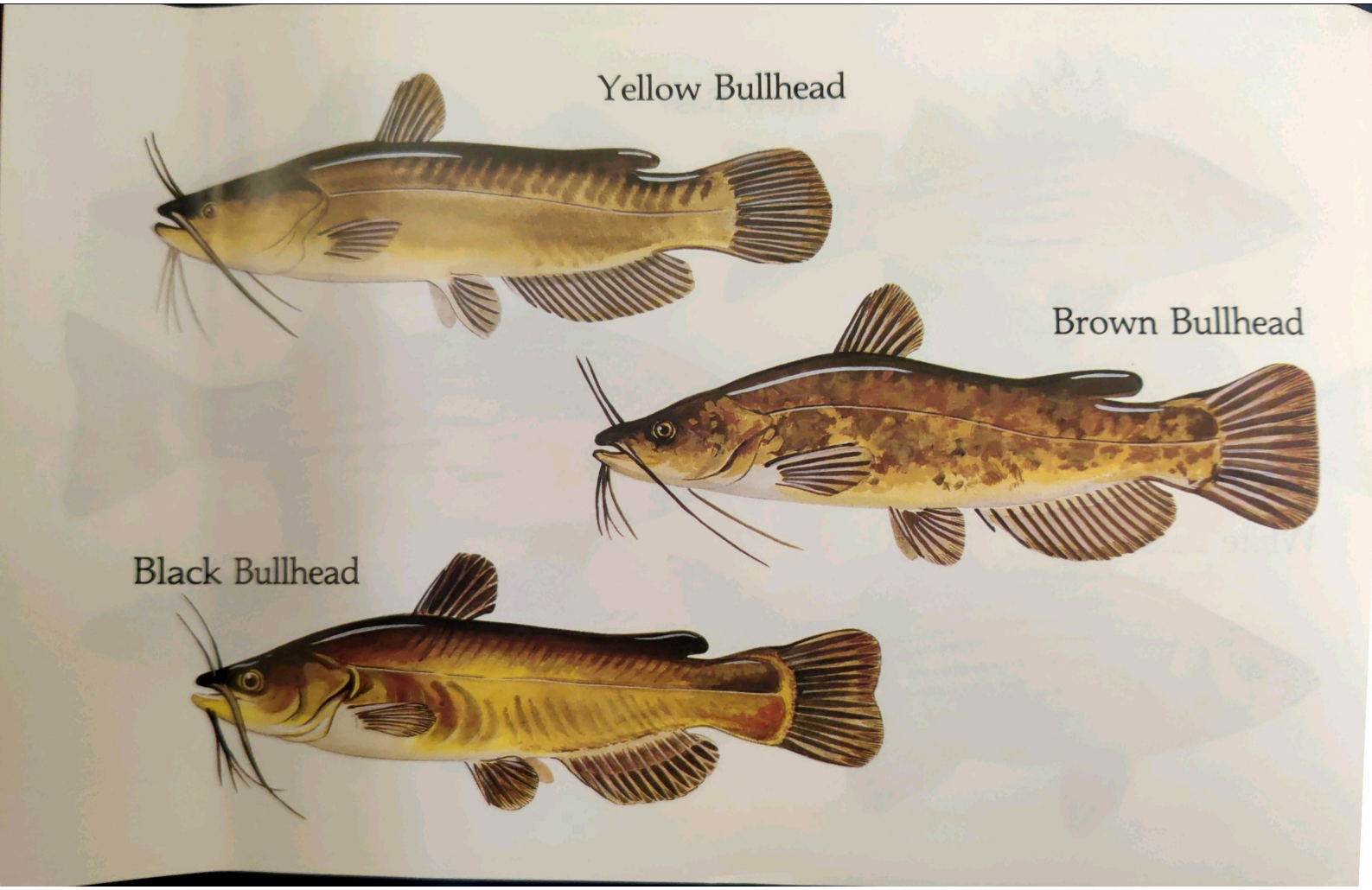
Black Crappie

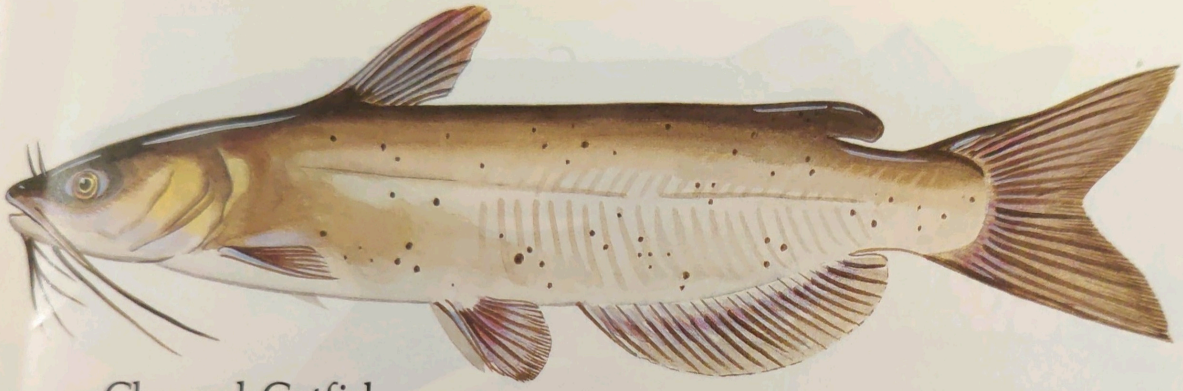
Green Sunfish

White Crappie


Walleye
Yellow Perch
Sauger

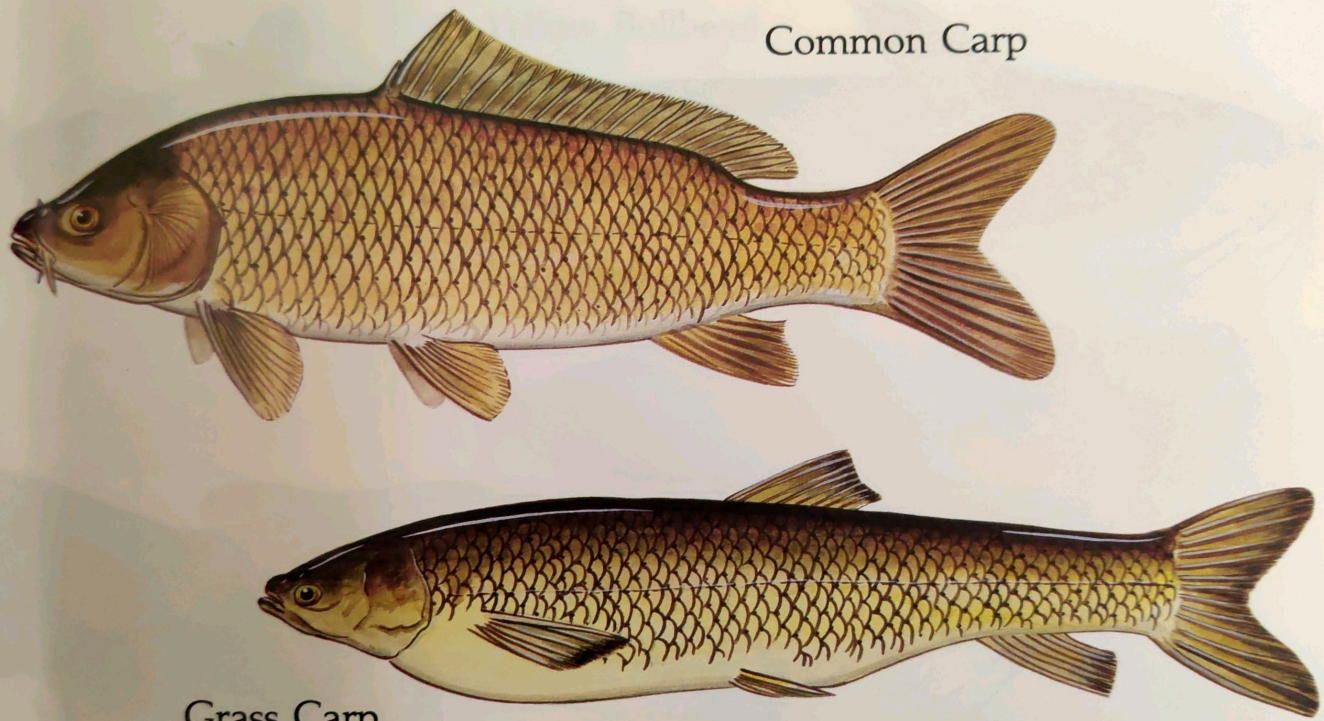

Yellow Bass
White Bass
Hybrid Striped Bass


Yellow Bullhead
Brown Bullhead
Black Bullhead



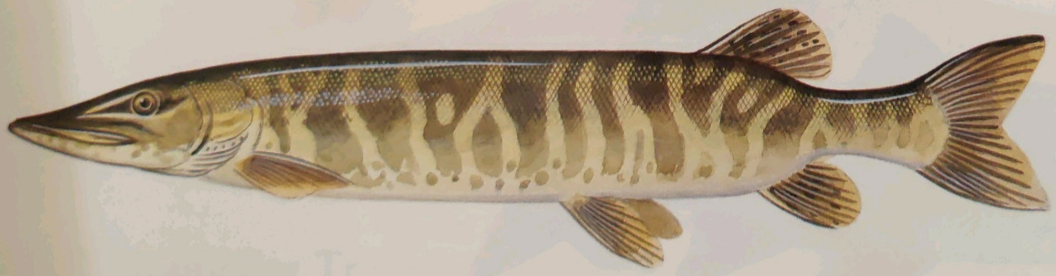
Channel Catfish

Flathead Catfish


Common Carp
Grass Carp

Muskellunge

Northern Pike

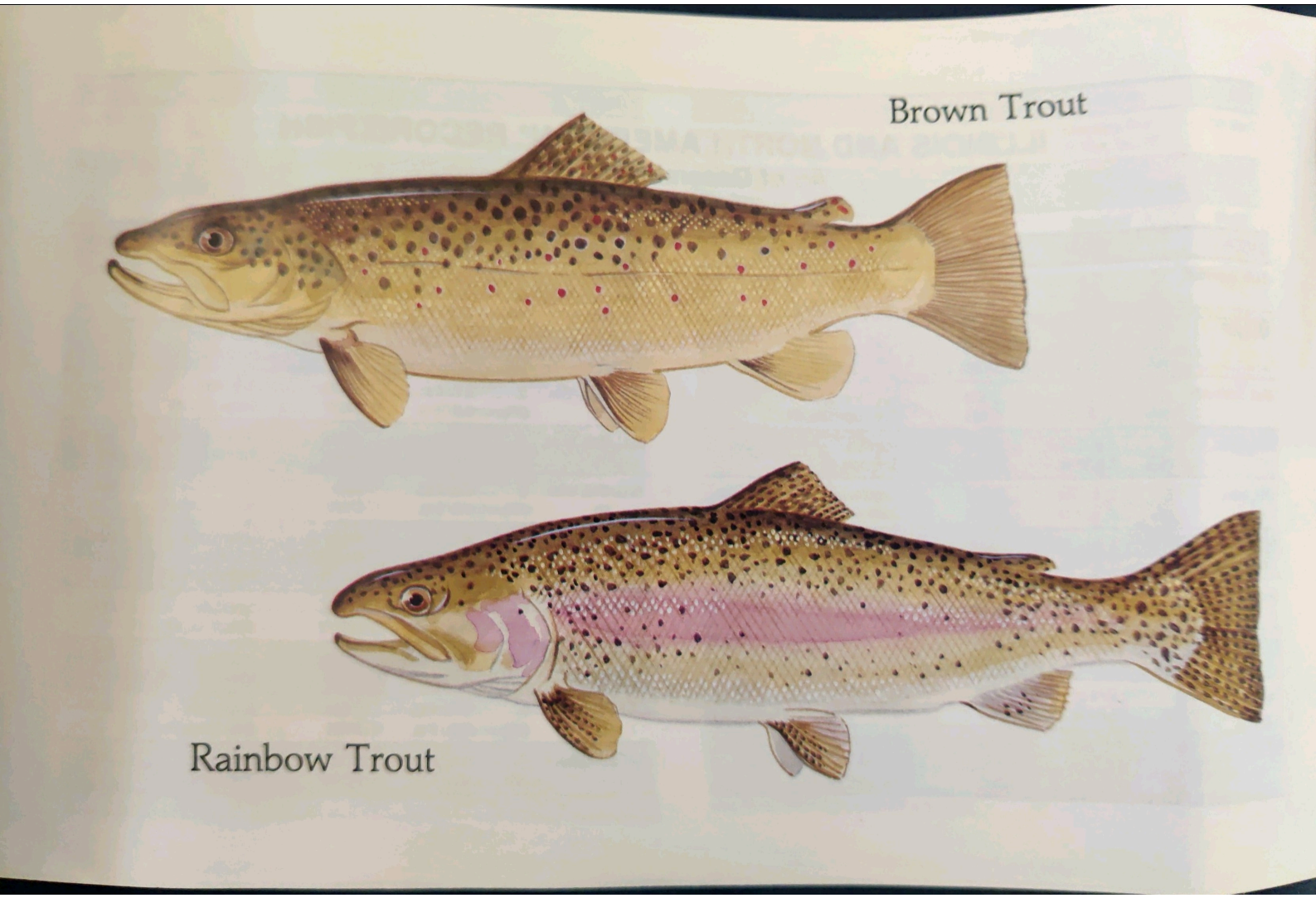


Tiger Muskie

Coho Salmon

Chinook Salmon

Lake Trout


Brown Trout
Rainbow Trout

ILLINOIS AND NORTH AMERICAN* RECORD FISH

As of December 31, 1998

SPECIES		WEIGHT	DATE CAUGHT	LOCATION	COUNTY
BASS, Largemouth	(I)	13 lb./ 1 oz.	2/15/76	Stone Quarry Lk.	Lake
	(NA)	22 lb./ 4 oz.	6/ 2/32	Montgomery Lk., GA	
BASS, Rock	(I)	1 lb./10 oz.	5/ 5/87	Aux Sable Creek	Grundy
	(NA)	3 lb./ 0 oz.	8/ 1/74	York River, ONT.	
	(NA)	3 lb./ 0 oz.	6/13/69	Sugar Creek, IN	
BASS, Smallmouth	(I)	6 lb./ 7 oz.	3/26/85	Strip Mine	Fulton
	(NA)	11 lb./15 oz.	7/ 9/55	Dale Hollow Lake, KY	
BASS, Spotted	(I)	7 lb./ 3.12 oz.	3/15/92	Strip Mine	Fulton
	(NA)	8 lb./15 oz.	3/18/78	Smith Lake, AL	
BASS, Striped	(I)	31 lb./ 7oz.	5/23/94	Sangchris Lake	Christian
	(NA)	67 lb./ 1 oz.	8/15/97	Colorado River, AZ	
BASS, Hybrid Striped	(I)	20 lb./ 0.32 oz.	6/20/93	Lake of Egypt	Johnson
	(NA)	27 lb./ 5 oz.	4/27/97	Geers Ferry Lake, AK	
BASS, White	(I)	4 lb./14 oz.	10/ 7/81	Kaskaskia River	Clinton
	(NA)	6 lb./ 7 oz.	9/19/89	Saginaw Bay, MI	
BASS, Yellow	(I)	2 lb./ 0 oz.	5/ 5/94	Farm Pond	Madison
	(NA)	2 lb./ 5 oz.	3/26/91	Kiamichi River, OK	
BLUEGILL	(I)	3 lb./ 8 oz.	5/10/87	Farm Pond	Jasper
	(NA)	4 lb./12 oz.	4/ 9/50	Ketone Lake, AL	
BOWFIN	(I)	16 lb./ 6 oz.	9/23/84	Rend Lake	Jefferson
	(I)	16 lb./ 6 oz.	9/14/92	Bay Creek	Pope
	(NA)	21 lb./ 8 oz.	1/29/80	Forest Lake, SC	

SPECIES		WEIGHT	DATE CAUGHT	LOCATION	COUNTY
BUFFALO	(I)	48 lb./ 0 oz.	1936	Mississippi River	Adams
(Bigmouth)	(NA)	70 lb./ 5 oz.	4/21/80	Bussey Brake, LA	
(Smallmouth)	(NA)	88 lb./ 8 oz.	11/14/93	Lake Wylie, NC	
BUFFALO, Black	(I)	23 lb./12 oz.	7/27/84	Rock River	Lee
	(NA)	54 lb./ 8 oz.	5/24/97	Percy Priest, TN	
BULLHEAD, Black	(I)	5 lb./ 6 oz.	4/24/88	Strip Mine	Fulton
	(NA)	8 lb./15 oz.	8/19/87	Sturgis Pond, MI	
BULLHEAD, Brown	(I)	2 lb./10.4 oz.	4/25/93	Weldon Springs	De Witt
	(NA)	6 lb./ 2 oz.	1/19/91	Pearl River, MS	
BULLHEAD, Yellow	(I)	5 lb./ 4 oz.	1955	Fox River	Kane
	(NA)	4 lb./ 8 oz.	7/15/89	Mormon Lake, AZ	
CARP	(I)	51 lb./ 0 oz.	5/ 1/94	Lake Hillcrest	Madison
	(NA)	57 lb./13 oz.	6/19/83	Tidal Basin Washington, D.C.	
CARP, Bighead	(I)	43 lb./ 3 oz.	5/25/95	Lyerla Lake	Union
	(NA)	10 lb./ 0 oz.	11/23/95	Kentucky Lk., KY	
CATFISH, Blue	(I)	80 lb./ 0 oz.	10/30/98	Mississippi River	Monroe
	(NA)	111 lb./ 0 oz.	7/ 5/96	Wheeler Reservoir, AL	
CATFISH, Channel	(I)	45 lb./ 4 oz.	2/ 7/87	Baldwin Lake	St. Clair
	(NA)	58 lb./ 0 oz.	7/ 7/64	Sante Cooper Rsv., SC	
CATFISH, Flathead	(I)	78 lb./ 0 oz.	8/11/95	Carlyle Lake	Clinton
	(NA)	92 lb./ 0 oz.	2/25/95	Toledo Bend Lk., TX	

SPECIES		WEIGHT	DATE CAUGHT	LOCATION	COUNTY
CRAPPIE, Black	(I)	4 lb./ 8 oz.	5/15/76	Rend Lake	Franklin
	(NA)	6 lb./ 0 oz.	11/28/69	Westwego Canal, LA	
CRAPPIE, White	(I)	4 lb./ 7 oz.	4/ 8/73	Farm Pond	Morgan
	(NA)	5 lb./ 3 oz.	7/31/57	Enid Dam, MS	
DRUM, Freshwater	(I)	35 lb./ 0 oz.	1960	DuQuoin City Lake	Perry
	(NA)	54 lb./ 8 oz.	4/20/72	Nickajack Lake, TN	
GOLDEYE	(I)	2 lb./ 1 oz.	7/26/98	Embarras River	Cumberland
	(NA)	3 lb./13 oz.	8/ 9/87	Oahe Tailwater, SD	
GRASS CARP	(I)	66 lb./ 8 oz.	7/ 8/98	Lake Petersburg	Menard
	(NA)	62 lb./ 0 oz.	5/13/91	Emerald Valley Lake, AL	
MUSKELLUNGE	(I)	37 lb./13 oz.	4/ 1/97	Shabbona Lake	DeKalb
	(NA)	69 lb./11 oz.	10/20/49	Chippewa Flowage, WI	
MUSKIE, Tiger	(I)	26 lb./2.88 oz.	8/ 4/89	Summerset Lake	Winnebago
	(NA)	51 lb./ 3 oz.	7/16/19	Lake Vieux Desert, WI/MI	
NORTHERN PIKE	(I)	26 lb./ 15 oz.	11/ 9/89	Strip Mine Lake	Kankakee
	(NA)	46 lb./ 2 oz.	9/15/40	Sacandaga Rsvr., NY	
PERCH, Yellow	(I)	2 lb./8.75 oz.	1/ 5/74	Arrowhead Club	Will
	(NA)	4 lb./ 3 oz.	5/1865	Lake Bordentown, NJ	
SALMON, Atlantic (Inland)	(I)	18 lb./11.25 oz.	5/26/79	Lake Michigan	Cook
	(NA)	22 lb./11 oz.	8/24/82	Lobstick Lake, Newfoundland, CAN.	
SALMON, Chinook (Inland)	(I)	37 lb./ 0 oz.	8/ 7/76	Lake Michigan	Lake
	(NA)	44 lb./14 oz.	7/19/94	Lake Michigan, WI	
SALMON, Coho (Inland)	(I)	20 lb./ 9 oz.	5/24/72	Lake Michigan	Lake
	(NA)	33lb./ 4 oz.	9/27/89	Salmon River, NY	
SALMON, Pink (Inland)	(I)	3 lb./ 4 oz.	7/ 5/92	Lake Michigan	Lake
	(NA)	3 lb./14 oz.	9/13/83	Poplar River, MN	
SAUGER	(I)	5 lb./12.5 oz.	7/30/67	Mississippi River	Jo Daviess
	(NA)	8 lb./12 oz.	10/ 6/71	Lake Sakakawea, ND	

SPECIES		WEIGHT	DATE CAUGHT	LOCATION	COUNTY
SAUGER-WALLEYE, Hybrid	(I)	8 lb./7.68 oz.	11/21/98	Mississippi River	Rock Island
	(NA)	15 lb./10 oz.	1/11/95	Ft. Peck Res., MT	
STURGEON, Shovelnose	(I)	5 lb./2.56 oz.	5/30/88	Rock River	Rock Island
	(NA)	5 lb./ 4 oz.	2/16/98	Mississippi River, MN	
SUNFISH, Green	(I)	2 lb./ 1 oz.	6/28/81	Farm Pond	De Witt
	(NA)	2 lb./ 2 oz.	6/18/71	Stockton Lake, MO	
	(NA)	2 lb./ 2 oz.	5/28/61	Cherokee Co. Pit, KS	
SUNFISH, Hybrid	(I)	2 lb./4.48 oz.	6/16/90	Farm Pond	Jersey
	(NA)	2 lb./ 3 oz.	6/24/93	Flatbranch Creek, IL	
SUNFISH, Redear	(I)	2 lb./12.3 oz.	9/ 7/85	Marion CC Lake	Williamson
	(NA)	5 lb./ 4 oz.	6/27/94	Folson S. Canal, CA	
TROUT, Brook	(I)	7 lb./ 5 oz.	11/ 3/ 98	Lake Michigan	Lake
	(NA)	14 lb./ 8 oz.	7/1916	Nipigon River, Ontario, CAN	
TROUT, Brown	(I)	36 lb./ 11.5 oz.	6/22/97	Lake Michigan	Cook
	(NA)	40 lb./ 4 oz.	5/ 9/92	Little Red River, AR	
TROUT, Lake	(I)	37 lb./ 8 oz.	6/10/95	Lake Michigan	Lake
	(NA)	72 lb./ 4 oz.	8/19/95	Great Bear Lake, N.W.T. Canada	
TROUT, Rainbow (Inland)	(I)	31 lb./6.72 oz.	7/10/93	Lake Michigan	Lake
	(NA)	37 lb./ 0 oz.	11/25/47	Lake Pend Oreille, ID	
TROUT, Tiger	(I)	8 lb./12.5 oz.	6/26/77	Lake Michigan	Cook
	(NA)	20 lb./13 oz.	8/12/78	Lake Michigan, WI	
WALLEYE	(I)	14 lb./ 0 oz.	1961	Kankakee River	Kankakee
	(NA)	25 lb./ 0 oz.	8/ 1/60	Old Hickory Lake, TN	
WARMOUTH	(I)	1 lb./13 oz.	5/22/71	Farm Pond	Cumberland
	(NA)	2 lb./ 7 oz.	10/19/85	Yellow River, FL	

*North American Records from the 1998 Edition National Fresh Water Fishing Hall of Fame (NFWFHOF)

Note: Illinois Record Fish are updated as new records are set. "North American" Records are updated once a year when the new edition of the NFWFHOF is published.

Illinois
Department of
Natural Resources

The Illinois Department of Natural Resources does not discriminate based upon race, color, national origin, age, sex or disability in its programs, services, activities and facilities. If you believe you have been discriminated against or if you wish additional information, please contact the Department at (217) 785-0067, TDD (217) 782-9175, or the U.S. Department of the Interior, Office of Equal Employment, Washington, D.C. 20240.

Printed by authority of The State of Illinois

3144986-200M-5/00 George Ryan, Governor

Printed on Recycled Paper